

Saddleback pastor Warren declines NAMB post

MISSION VIEJO, Calif. (ABP) — Rick Warren, pastor of one of the fastest-growing churches in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), has turned down an invitation to become the first president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB).

Warren, who founded Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., in 1980 and developed it into one of the largest churches in the country, told the committee seeking a NAMB president: "Although I consider this posi-

tion to be the most strategic one in the SBC, God has not released me from my call to Saddleback Church, so I cannot accept your nomination."

Warren was the first and unanimous choice of the 13-member incorporators group assigned to nominate a president for the new agency, which is the centerpiece of a plan to downsize and restructure the SBC bureaucracy.

The NAMB, created from the merger of three current SBC agencies, will coordinate all SBC evangelism and church-starting efforts.

The merger would bring together the resources of the Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission, and Brotherhood Commission, while downsizing staff.

In anticipation of the June merger, staff cuts already are underway at the three agencies.

C. B. Hogue, chairman of the incorporators group, told the "California Southern Baptist" newspaper he received Warren's letter by fax Dec. 2 but he declined to discuss the contents.

He acknowledged the committee had held "initial,

exploratory conversation" with several persons, and that Warren "was talked to a second time in the process."

The incorporators group was chosen to recommend a president for NAMB, but only the trustees of the new agency can elect the chief executive.

That board will not be constituted officially until the end of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in June 1997.

The name most frequently mentioned for the NAMB position is Norfolk, Va., pastor Bob Reccord, who heads the Implementation Task Force steering the SBC restructuring plan.

Meanwhile, the trustees who are scheduled for election to the new NAMB board will meet for the first time Feb. 7 in Dallas to get acquainted, although they can take no action until after the June convention.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

Record

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

DECEMBER 19, 1996

VOL. 120

No. 45



New MBCB officers selected

New officers of the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, from left, are Robert Upchurch, Tupelo, chairman; Mrs. Sue Dockery, Jackson, secretary; and David Sellers, pastor of Tylertown Church, Tylertown, vice chairman.

Memphis hospital signs casino contract

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc. (BMHCS) in Memphis has contracted through a DeSoto County branch hospital to provide health care services for employees of Grand Casino in Tunica County, and the agreement is raising eyebrows among Mississippi Baptists.

That's because BMHCS is one-third owned by the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC), which for several years has opposed the legalization and rapid spread of casinos around the state.

John N. Robbins, BMHCS executive vice-president, confirmed the contract Dec. 3 and issued the following statement: "Baptist Memorial Health Care provides industrial health nurse services such as wellness and preventative medicine for many corporations in the Mid-South.

"It is the mission of Baptist Memorial Health Care to serve the health needs of all people within our geographic area and literally around the world.

"We provide compassionate care in the name of Christ to all people regardless of race, religion, vocation, or lifestyle.

"At the same time, we are most sensitive to the moral concerns of those of the Baptist faith and seek to uphold basic Christian principles in representing this institution to others."

Robbins stressed that BMHCS is opposed to gambling, but at

the same time feels a ministry commitment to care for individuals in situations where a Christian witness is needed.

Robbins said BMHCS will remain sensitive to the concerns of the three state Baptist conventions affiliated with the health care system — Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee — by taking such measures as turning down invitations to provide exhibits at health fairs and convention meetings being held at casinos.

Mississippi is currently the only state of the three that allows casino gambling.

Arkansas voters recently turned down a proposal to open that state to casino gambling, and Tennesseans have also been successful in keeping casino gambling out of their state.

Robbins also pointed out that the Grand Casino contract applies only to casino employees at an on-site clinic, with emphases on prevention and wellness, and does not involve services to casino patrons.

Paul G. Jones II, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) Christian Action Commission (CAC) commended BMHCS for its years of Baptist service to the residents of the three-state area, but he questioned the propriety of the casino contract in light of strong Baptist opposition to legalized gambling.

"The churches of the MBC have long appreciated the ministry and health services provided by BMHCS.

"The recent decision by

BMHCS to enter into a contract (with) Grand Casino is both regrettable and offensive to those who have long fought to keep gambling out of our state.

"We strongly disagree with a policy that places employees of BMHCS inside a facility whose product or service is in direct contradiction to historic Baptist positions on moral and ethical issues.

"We find it hard to understand how a contract with Grand Casino is being sensitive to the moral concerns of Baptists, or (how the contract)

upholds Christian principles.

"We are deeply disappointed by this action and trust the churches of Mississippi will communicate their displeasure and disappointment," Jones said.

Baptists in DeSoto County, where the BMHCS branch hospital with the casino contract is located, were instrumental in defeating a November gambling referendum in their county for the third time since gambling was legalized by the Mississippi Legislature.

DeSoto County is just north of Tunica County.

First, Jackson's Christmas program to air on ABC television network

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — On Christmas Eve a one-hour music special from First Church, Jackson, will be broadcast by the ABC television network following its regularly scheduled program "Nightline."

Called "A Christmas Celebration," the program is being produced by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Radio and Television Commission (RTVC) in cooperation with First Church.

"A Christmas Celebration" features a 400-voice choir and a 50-piece orchestra under the direction of Larry Black, the church's minister of music. The annual event attracts thousands of people to multiple performances during the Christmas season.

"From Dec. 13 through Dec. 15 we will be taping several live performances of the church's annual 'Carols by Candlelight,' which, after editing, will be the program presented on ABC," said Bob Thornton, vice president of tele-

vision services at the RTVC. "The church's production staff and equipment are being used for the taping. We'll be editing the ABC version at our facility in Fort Worth beginning Dec. 16."

The program's producer is Bernie Hargis, an award-winning producer for RTVC.

In 1995 First Church worked in cooperation with the RTVC to produce an Easter program for ABC. Hargis also produced that program.

"Pam Warren (the church's media director) and the media volunteers did such a splendid job of showcasing the church's choir and orchestra that we wanted them to work with us in producing the Christmas special for ABC this year," he said. "The church has one of the premier music programs in the country, along with a wonderful television ministry."

Frank Pollard, pastor of First Church, is preacher for both the radio and TV versions of "The Baptist Hour," which is produced weekly by the RTVC.

Overcoming 'Christmas blues' possible

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

"Tis' the season to be jolly, fa-la-la-la, la-la, la, la." Or so goes the familiar Christmas song. However, not all people are jolly during the Christmas season. In reality, the Christmas season can be a time of great stress, sadness, and disappointment.

For some there are obvious reasons for having the blues at Christmas. Those who have lost a loved one during the previous year are facing their first Christmas without them. Others have family members who have moved away, or they are absent because of military service or job demands, making for a lonely holiday season.

These create empty places at the home and open the door for a blue Christmas.

Then there are those who experience depression during this season for not so obvious reasons. A neighbor down the street might have all the evidence of a normal, happy Christmas — a house decorated with greenery and lights, presents stacked under the tree, gatherings of friends and family — but underneath it all is the heartache of a deteriorating relationship or the tragedy of chemical dependency.

Still somewhere else, for reasons that are as much a mystery to the person as to the family, an individual is drawn deeper and deeper into the dark hole

of depression every time the holiday season rolls around.

There really is such a thing as the Christmas blues, according to Bradley Pope, a licensed professional counselor with The Shepherd's Staff, a Christian marriage & family counseling center in Jackson.

"Holidays are traditional family gathering times," Pope said. "People who grew up in painful or dysfunctional families can find the holidays painful," he added.

"These can be deep, psychic memories," Pope said. "A person may find themselves asking, 'Why am I feeling so bad when others are so happy?'"

However, there are some things a person can do to help relieve the Christmas blues.

Pope suggests instead of trying not to feel depressed or blue, acknowledge it. "Call it by name, feel it, live with it," he said.

"At the same time, put a boundary around it and move on into your present family with as many new and good things as you want to be there," Pope said.

Pope offers similar suggestions for the family facing their first holiday season without a loved one.

There is a tendency in people to plan a busy holiday schedule in order to avoid grief. Pope suggests that is not the best approach. Instead, he says "plan a time of grieving, a time of acknowledging your pain. Then, plan to move on past it to

the joy of the season."

Sometimes the Christmas blues are the result of too many unrealistic expectations. If one expects Christmas to be perfect, it is a set-up for disappointment. A home where there is no room for mistakes is also a home with no room for the spontaneity of joy.

Lowering expectations is probably the most important

called the Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). According to "USA Today Magazine," as many as 30 million Americans suffer from some degree of SAD.

Medical researchers have found that the increased darkness during the winter months results in an increase of the hormone melatonin, which makes people sleepy and sad.

"Our eyes send more than images to our brain," explains Al Lewy, professor of Ophthalmology and Psychiatry at the Oregon Health Science University. They also tell our bodies how long the day is. Certain glands stimulate drowsiness by secreting melatonin. It also influences mood, hunger and the metabolism rate.

Symptoms of SAD include: low energy, overeating, excessive sleep, weight gain. Some cases include severe depression. Exposure to extra bright lights can change the timing of melatonin release.

When it comes down to it, the way to face the Christmas blues is to plan your holiday season to include plenty of friends, lots of singing, bright lights, and an appropriate space to acknowledge the pain and grief that is part of the human experience. And in the middle of it all, thanksgiving to the God who sent his Son in a manger.

Fighting holiday stress

- ◆ Scratch every third item of your "to do" list. If it isn't important enough to remember, then it probably doesn't need to be done.
- ◆ Take care of yourself. Exercise, pray, and have a quiet time even at Christmas.
- ◆ Shop with a budget so gift-giving isn't stress-building. It really is the thought that counts.
- ◆ Acknowledge feelings of grief, loss, or pain. Crying is permitted at Christmas.
- ◆ If you're lonely, get around people. Volunteer at a hospital visiting room or visit a nursing home.
- ◆ Give yourself permission to experience the joy of the holidays. Christmas does have a multitude of happiness and joy. You deserve it.
- ◆ Make worship a priority, both personal and public. Jesus is the reason for the season.

thing to do to help make Christmas become the happy, peaceful holiday it really should be.

Then there are times when there is no explanation for the Christmas blues. Fortunately, medical science offers a clue.

There is a clinical name for this type of Christmas blues. It is

NOBTS slated to offer classes in Booneville

New Orleans Seminary will offer Christian education and church music courses in Booneville if as many as 12 students enroll in each of the two classes by the January 20, 1997, start date.

"Pastors of small and medium-size churches often express the need for help in the areas of Christian education and music. Many churches could have part-time education and music workers by enlisting persons from the congregation to enroll for training in such courses," said Chester Vaughn of Jackson, director of the seminary's Jackson extension center.

The education and music curricula each offer a total of eight courses. Each course

meets one night per week over an eight-week period during the regular school year.

Costs include a one-time registration fee of \$25 and \$75 for each eight-week course.

"Churches may wish to assist in the training cost," Vaughn said.

Persons completing the eight courses in either curriculum will receive a Christian Education Certificate or Music Certificate from the seminary.

Seminary classes are presently meeting in Columbus, Jackson, Liberty, and Purvis.

For more information or to receive registration forms, students should contact their local associational Director of Missions.



Covenant of Cooperation

Signing the Covenant of Cooperation are (from left) Bill Causey, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB); Kermit McGregor, pastor of First Church, Mendenhall, MBCB president; Jerry Mixon, pastor of Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, MBCB secretary; and Bob Simmons, retired missionary, Meridian, MBCB vice-president. The covenant is being signed by trustees of the institutions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) at the request of messengers to the 1996 MBC annual meeting. Trustees involved include Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi Baptist Children's Village in Jackson, Mississippi College in Clinton, William Carey College in Hattiesburg, and Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain. The MBCB officers' signing was a voluntary, good-faith symbol of unity. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

SBC leaders: Churches remain key to missions

By Teresa Dickens
SBC Woman's Missionary Union

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Southern Baptist churches nurture the missionary call and sustain missionaries, as they teach about missions, pray for missions and give to missions, according to denominational missions leaders.

The chief executives of the Foreign Mission Board (FMB), Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) — the entities which coordinate the promotion of the Season of Foreign Missions — highlighted the importance of these activities in their interpretation of the 1996 theme, "Missionaries: From Churches with Love."

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which supports Southern Baptist foreign missions, has a goal this year of \$100 million.

The missions leaders said the theme not only emphasizes the love churches express for missionaries, but also the motivation behind sending more than 4,200 missionaries around the world.

"It is a good theme because the support churches give reflects their love for the missionaries and what the missionaries are doing on behalf of the churches," said Jerry Rankin, FMB president. "It

also is a theme that plugs into the idea of our love for a lost world and our desire to bring them to Jesus Christ through the witness and work of our missionaries.

"It also helps to emphasize that the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering does provide support for the missionaries," he continued. "The perception has been that the offering is for capital needs, for churches and for properties, but when Lottie Moon challenged the churches and WMU to collect the offering, it was to support more missionaries to come to China."

"It has always provided a large portion of our overseas budget which is basically missionary support."

Jim Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission, said the theme reminded him of Southern Baptists' responsibility and commitment to send out the best they have to offer.

"Southern Baptist missionaries represent the finest from among our congregations," he declared.

"The New Testament man-

date for us to be missionaries demands that we send nothing less than our best, and the commitment to send the best demonstrates our love for lost people around the globe," he said.

WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien emphasized prayer in her interpretation of the theme.

"It brings to mind the pic-

ture of churches being the rope holders — of reaching out and spanning the gap of separation of missionaries from their homeland through love and support during the time they are overseas. Love implies a personal relationship and we certainly foster that when we pray for them and learn about their work," she said.



Williams



Rankin



O'Brien

Winter quarter SS writers announced

Sunday School lesson writers for the first quarter of 1997 are Mark Long of Long Beach, writing for the "Explore the Bible" series; Thad Moore of Holly Springs, writing for the "Life and Work" series; and Mary Ellen Powell of Clinton, writing for the "Family Bible" series.

Long, a native of Long Beach, is pastor of Perkinson Church, Gulf Coast Association. He earned the Bachelor of Arts degree from Mississippi College, attended Southwestern and New Orleans seminaries, receiving a Ph.D. in New Testament from New Orleans Seminary. Previously, Long was youth minister at First Church, Gulfport and Superior Avenue



Long

Church, Bogalusa, La. He also pastored First Church, Pass Christian before coming to Perkinson Church. Long and his wife Stephanie have a two-year old son, Michael.

Moore is pastor of First Church, Holly Springs. A native of Grenada, he is married to the former Kim Taylor. They have two children; Lydia, 13 and Shaw, 10. Moore graduated from



Moore

Mississippi College and Midwestern Seminary, earning the Doctor of Ministry degree from New Orleans Seminary. Moore also teaches Old Testament at Blue Mountain College and serves on the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Powell is a native of

Vicksburg. She attended Hinds Community College and Mississippi State University, where she received Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees. She is married to Jeff Powell, Baptist Student Union Director at Mississippi College. Previously, they served as home missionaries to Las Vegas, Nev. from 1989 - 1992. They have two children: Seth, 6, and Benjamin, 7. Powell is the Administrative Assistant to the Director of Institutional Advancement at Hinds Community College.



Powell

Beginning in January 1997, the Sunday School writers for "The Baptist Record" will rotate on a quarterly basis. For the past several years lesson writers have changed every six months.

MBREA slates 51st annual meeting in Tupelo

The Mississippi Baptist Religious Education Association (MBREA) will host its fifty-first annual convention Jan. 30-Feb. 1 at the Ramada Inn in Tupelo.

The theme of the meeting this year is, "Rediscover my vision! Reclaim my relationships! Rejoice in my ministry!"

The meeting will also mark the tenth anniversary of the Mississippi Childhood Education Association (MCEA).

Convention guests include:

— Mike Rogers, founder and president of Kingdom Agenda Ministries in Lexington, Ky.

Rogers teaches "Experiencing God" conferences and is a contributing author to "Experiencing God" magazine.

He co-authored, along with Claude King, the book, "The Kingdom Agenda: Experiencing God in Your Workplace."



Rogers

— Bill Young, childhood education/administration and family life consultant in Franklin, Tenn.

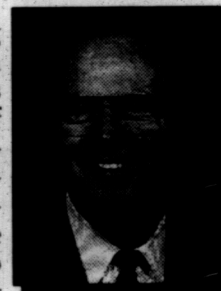
Young served from 1970-1992 as manager of the preschool/children's section in the Discipleship Training Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

He received the Distinguished Leadership Award in 1996 from the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association.

— Willa Ruth Garlow, popular speaker, consultant, teacher, and writer from Oklahoma City, Okla.

She will be the speaker at the buffet banquet on the evening of Jan. 31. Cost of the banquet is \$15 per person, and deadline for reservations is Jan. 17.

Garlow has written several books published by Convention Press and Broadman, as well as



Young

numerous curriculum materials.

— Ron Mumbower, minister of counseling since 1983 at First Church, Jackson.

Mumbower is counseling supervisor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson and at Mississippi College in Clinton.

His focus is individual, marriage, and family counseling. His responsibilities include family seminars, conferences, and training courses.

— Cindy Mathis, harpist from Tupelo. Mathis will provide special music for the Jan. 31 banquet.

In addition to the buffet banquet on Jan. 31, activities on that day include a MCEA luncheon and fashion show; golf tournament; and bowling tournament.

Childcare is available at no cost only during the banquet. Reservation deadline is Jan. 17.

To assure room availability,



Garlow

lodging reservations should be made directly with the Ramada Inn in Tupelo by Jan. 15. Telephone: (601) 844-4111.

Special MBREA convention room rates are available when requested at time of reservation.

To join MBREA/MCEA or to register for any activities listed above, contact Cortez Hutchinson, secretary-treasurer, c/o First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 780, Yazoo City, MS 39194. Telephone: (601) 746-2471.



Mumbower

The group's mission statement is, "The MBREA exists to promote sound religious education, to help provide personal and professional development, and give encouragement and opportunities for fellowship."

For more information on MBREA, contact Jeff Ingram, president, c/o Highland Baptist Church, Vicksburg, MS 39180. Telephone: (601) 636-7349.

BSSB to debut 'The Minister's Family'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A profile of Franklin Graham, heir apparent to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, is the lead article for the first issue of "The Minister's Family," a magazine published by the Baptist Sunday School Board (BSSB) pastor-staff leadership department.

Designed in the format of a "model home," as editor Matt Tullos describes it, "The Minister's Family" has sections headed "Guest Room," "Master Suite," "Family Room," "Kitchen" and "Kid's Room," including pages for preteens and teenagers.

"Back Porch" wraps up the issue and gives a glimpse of the next issue. Dena Dyer, a minister's wife and writer, tells the story of Franklin Graham, "The Ultimate Preacher's Kid," from youthful prankster to rebellious young adult to evangelistic preacher.

Of his colorful earlier years and his subsequent total commitment to God, Graham tells readers, "What is important about my story is important about every person's story: God has a plan for each of his children and he will bring that plan to successful completion."

Tullos said the new quarterly magazine, which begins publication with the January-February-March 1997 issue, is designed to encourage, inspire, inform and enrich the lives of ministers and their families.

"We'd like to be a source of inspiration, release, humor and kindredship," he said.

On "The Front Porch" of the first issue is BSSB president Jimmy Draper discussing the best reward God can give a pastor.

Other features include interviews with pastor Adrian Rogers on his home and advice for young ministers; Lanier Worldwide CEO Wes Cantrell on growing up in a preacher's home; and Bernadine Cantrell, writer and wife of Wes Cantrell, on the art of listening.

Articles on romance, dirty laundry, surviving the financial squeeze, secrets for surviving in a minister's home, tips for raising children and life-changing statements from a youth minister are included.

A recipe for a Sunday lunch is offered in "The Kitchen."

"The Minister's Family," \$3.95 quarterly, may be ordered through the BSSB toll-free number: (800) 458-2772.

the MINISTER'S family

ANALYSIS:

By Erich Bridges
SBC Foreign Mission Board

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — All was calm one night just after Christmas 1993, until armed men came to a Baptist family's home in the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan.

Vladimir Limorev, a 34-year-old ethnic Russian Baptist, was taken outside, beaten and shot.

His wife Helena fled for help. When she returned with the authorities, she found her house on fire and nine people dead: her husband and four children (ages 2, 4, 6 and 9), her mother, a visiting woman and her daughter, and a neighbor who had tried to protect the family.

Nothing was reported stolen.

Asked after the joint funeral service how she could cope with such a tragedy, Mrs. Limorev, pregnant with her fifth child, said simply: "The Lord has given me power to overcome."

Who murdered the Limorevs and their friends?

It's true that many Tajiks despise the ethnic Russians living among them because of Russia's long, brutal domination of Tajikistan.

The Tajiks also are heavily Muslim, and some Muslims violently oppose any Christians who attempt to evangelize non-Russians in Tajikistan.

"There is no doubt these particular murders were committed for religious motives," reported Boris Perchatkin to a U.S. congressional commission several months later.

Perchatkin is a former Soviet political prisoner and president of an institute that speaks out for persecuted Christians in the former Soviet Union.

He named 34 Christians severely beaten or martyred for

their faith in the region during the previous two years.

"If earlier the most active of Christians were sent to prison, now they are robbed, tortured, crippled and killed," he said, "but in the pages of the Western press there is not one word."

One reason for that silence — besides ignorance or indifference — is the sheer frequency of such attacks, according to mission researcher David Barrett, who collects information on Christian martyrs worldwide.

"In India this is happening all the time," Barrett reports. "Usually it starts as a Hindu-Muslim riot over some trivial thing like a Muslim insulting a Hindu or killing a cow."

"Then at some stage somebody says, 'It's the Christians; kill the Christians!,' and so the mob rushes to the nearest church, drags the pastor out, kills him with his family, and burns the place down."

"There are so many such cases that the press doesn't bother to deal with it as a news item."

Such killings in India also illustrate the most common setting for modern martyrdoms: societies in turmoil.

"Wherever there's civil unrest — like Sarajevo, Rwanda, Somalia — the people who've got a grudge against Christians

can take it out on them without being noticed," Barrett explains.

Barrett estimates an average of 160,000 Christians are killed for their faith every year.

His definition of martyrs: "believers in Christ who lose their lives prematurely in a situation of witness as a result of human hostility."

In 1995 alone, 150 foreign missionaries were murdered

while at their task, according to mission agency reports. "These are people whose names we know," says Barrett.

For every killing of a Western missionary or a high-profile Christian leader that captures international attention, a thousand anonymous Christians die virtually unnoticed — except by God.

Villagers stoned or burned by their neighbors for proclaiming Christ. Muslim converts to Christianity killed in secret by their own families.

The stated motive of their executioners doesn't necessarily define whether they are martyrs or not.

"Idi Amin in Uganda murdered 500,000 Christians, but he said it was for political reasons," Barrett recalls.

"Tell that to the pastors who were burned alive," he points out.

Though it may seem rare or extreme to American Christians, it is neither abnormal nor unusual for the faithful to face death.

Their blood is the seed of the church.

Paying the ultimate price



Sources: GEM Research

GRAPHIC By Stephanie Delgado

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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HBYOY SY VTXN HBTH
ETN, MBQ MAWW EBYM
IE TXN KQZ? WQOZ,
WACH HBQI IR HBY
WAKBH QC HBN
DQIXHYTXDY IRQX IE.
RETWVE CQIO: EAL

Clue: K equals G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts Sixteen Thirty-one.

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'Rest of Christmas story' found in Zaire

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—The next-to-last act of the "rest of the Christmas story" is now playing in central Africa and in multiple venues around the world, but it's not the Matthew/Luke story line where all is light and peace and exchanging gifts.

You'll find their script in the Book of Revelation.

By the tens, and perhaps hundreds, of thousands Hutu refugees follow not a brilliant star of hope, but a rapidly dimming spark of survival — the hope of rest and food and water and medicine at the end of footpaths wandering over mountains and through jungles.

Certainly they are not kings — or even warlords. Hutu warlords eat well and deal death to those who fall under their guns.

They don't observe the self-imposed limits of King Herod. Why stop with killing male children, two years old and under? Kill all your enemies, young and old, male and female, innocent or adversary.

any place else in the world where suffering and survival are paramount.

Americans prefer singing and sales.

There was, however, a lengthy feature on acquiring the perfect gift for your pet.

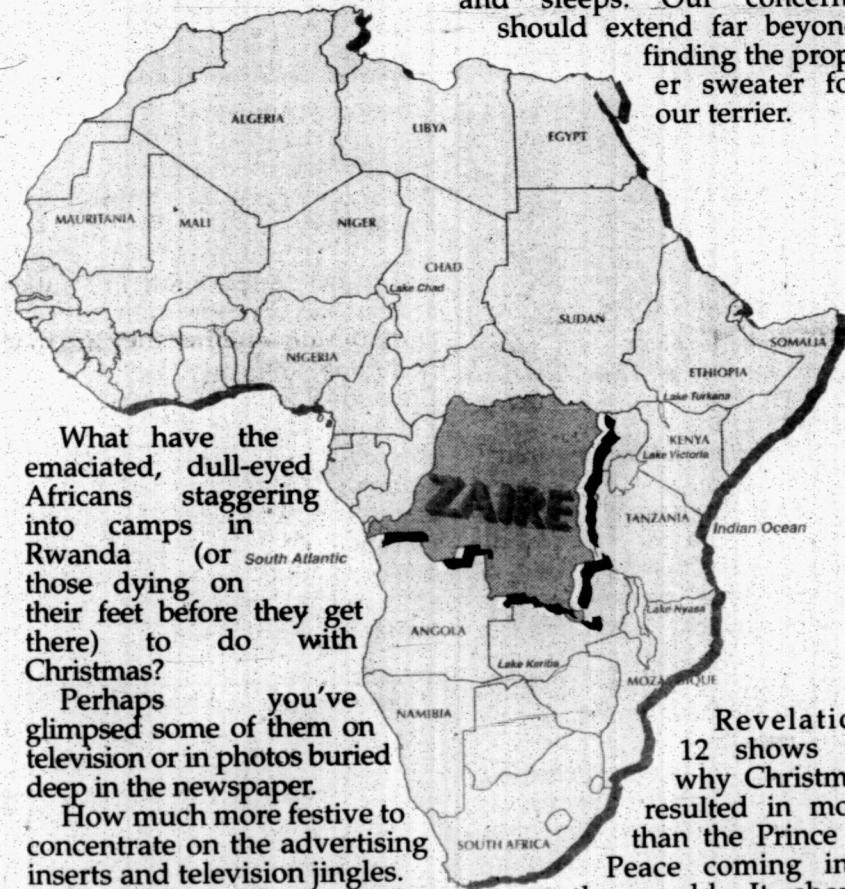
People often ask what we think about Christmas celebrations in our home country, but most don't really want to know.

We do appreciate the lights and colorful displays. We sing, perhaps too loudly to be polite — and with heartfelt emotion — our gratitude for the incarnation when God became human and broke into history as a helpless baby. We know the silent and holy night in our hearts. We are grateful to be able to share the holiday with parents, family and friends.

We are always painfully aware that the Christmas story is not completed when the kings pack up their camels and leave, the shepherds return to their fields and Mary's boy-child snuggles into her arms and sleeps. Our concerns should extend far beyond finding the proper sweater for our terrier.



THE REST OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY — Craig Bird (in white hat), former Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB) missionary journalist to Africa, looks over masses of Rwandan refugees at a camp near Lake Kivu in Goma, Zaire. The refugees used the lake as a source of both drinking and bathing water after a 1994 exodus from genocide in Rwanda. Bird wrote about FMB work in the camps, where thousands died from dehydration, starvation and disease. (BP Photo by P. Kevin Morley)



What have the emaciated, dull-eyed Africans staggering into camps in Rwanda (or those dying on their feet before they get there) to do with Christmas?

Perhaps you've glimpsed some of them on television or in photos buried deep in the newspaper.

How much more festive to concentrate on the advertising inserts and television jingles.

Watching the local evening news recently, there was no mention of Rwanda or Zaire or

quickly in Rev. 12:5-6 (NIV):

"She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne."

That's it.

From the heavenly perspective, Christmas was and is the pivotal battle in the spiritual warfare for our souls.

Satan and his forces have been hurled from heaven.

Rev. 12:12 is the rest of the Christmas story:

"Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth, and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows his time is short."

So, in 1996, Satan celebrates Christmas in fury with genocide in Zaire; raises toasts to the Christians being martyred for their devotion to that Jesus child; smiles at America's homeless sleeping in alleys as holiday lights reflect on their faces; embraces the corrupt officials, the drug dealers, the child abuser; warms in the flames of racial hatred; and rejoices when Christians live as if the Christmas story ended with Mary wrapping newborn Jesus and laying him in a cattle feed trough.

Or perhaps — at most — extending it to include the flight into Egypt.

When we go that far, we see that the furtive journey established perfectly the context of Revelation 12.

Jesus, born in the Middle East where religious hatred has been perfected, becomes a refugee in Africa, where some estimates say one in five people are displaced. He shares the Satanic oppression of his people from the first.

(My wife) Melissa and I are glad it's Christmas.

We look forward to giving and receiving presents and thanking God for emptying himself in Bethlehem and steadfastly setting his face toward the cross.

Instead of always saying, "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year," we often join our hearts with our suffering brothers and sisters in Africa and around the world and pray the words from Revelation that make the complete Christmas story endurable.

"Merry Christmas but, even so, come, Lord Jesus," we pray.

Then all God's children can enjoy the holiday.

First Person

By Craig Byrd
Southwestern Seminary

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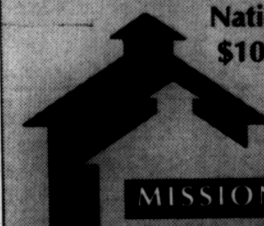
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Newell fills new role at Foundation

Jane Newell was elected on Dec. 5 as associate director of the Mississippi Baptist Foundation by the trustees of that organization. Since 1980, she has served as office secretary and more recently as administrative assistant to executive director Hal Fisher.



Newell

Newell, who begins her new duties in January, will aid in servicing the 830 active accounts of the agency.

According to Fisher, Newell will maintain contact with clients and potential clients and will track the numerous scholarships funded through the Foundation.

Newell attended Mississippi State University and New Orleans Seminary.

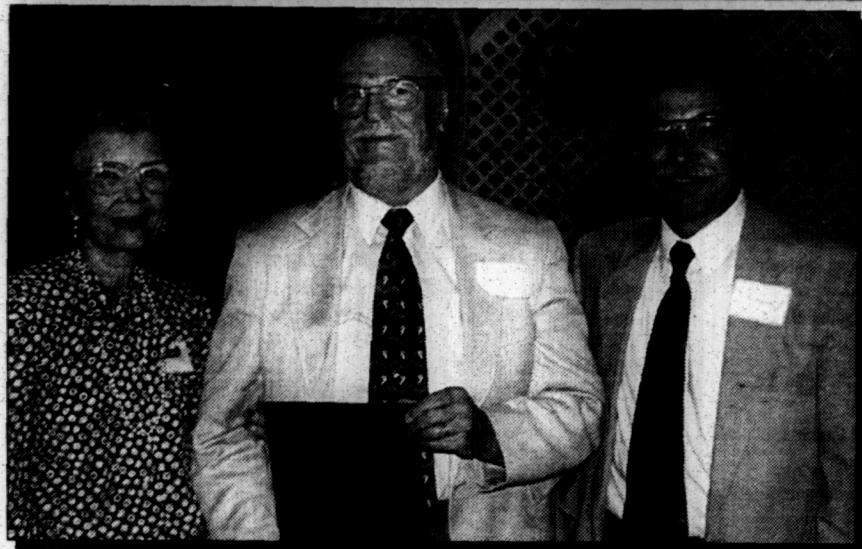
She and her husband L.C. have three children.

The Mississippi Baptist Foundation manages \$35 million in assets, the proceeds of which help fund missions and ministries in Mississippi and around the world.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

William Carey College Theatre will present "The Magician's Nephew" adapted by Auran Harris from C. S. Lewis as its annual play especially for children. Performances in the O. L. Quave Theatre are Dec. 19 and 20 at 7 p.m. and Dec. 21 at 10 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. The box office is open daily from 1 until 4 p.m. and seats may be reserved by calling (601) 582-6221. All tickets are \$3.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



The Samaritan Counseling Center at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center recently presented its annual Samaritan Awards to Eugene Dyess and J. Clark Hensley. Dyess (center) a retired pastoral counselor from Jackson received the award in commemoration of his work in helping to establish the Samaritan Counseling Center in 1994. He is pictured with his wife Sarah Jo (left) and Barry Click (right), director of the Samaritan Counseling Center. Hensley, a resident of Clinton, has held a number of positions in Mississippi Baptist life, including service as the executive director of the Christian Action Commission until 1982 and as director of missions for Hinds-Madison (Metro) Baptist Association.



Don Gann, pastor, Wynndale Church, Byram (left) recently conferred the title, Pastor Emeritus, on Charles Gentry, (second from left) who retired as founding pastor of the church. Also pictured are his wife Mary Catherine (third from left) and their children Charles, Jr., Joanie, John, and Bruce Tarbet, Joanie's husband.

Leaf River Church, Smith County, will present its Christmas Cantata on Dec. 22 at 6 p.m.

Shubuta Church, (Clarke), celebrated its 140th anniversary on Nov. 10. The guest speaker was Avery Jones of

West Point. Linda McInnis, church historian, presented each family with a new revised history of the church. James Manning is pastor.

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Macedonia Church, Mendenhall, held its first GA service in the history of the church on Sept. 15. Pictured, from left, are Rose Smith, Karen McLeod, Hilary Kalman, Cassidy Blair, and Brianna Blair. Gene Erwin is pastor.

North Delta Association will present the Cumberland Boys in concert at the Clarksdale Civic Auditorium

with Majesty Quartet on Jan 16 at 6:45 p.m. Tickets are \$5. For more information, call (601) 627-3417.

STAFF CHANGES

Jeff Kolk has been called as pastor of Benoit Church effective Nov. 24. He previously served on staff at First Church, Greenwood. Kolk is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary.



Kolk

Johnny Breazeale assumed his duties as pastor of Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, on Dec. 8. His previous pastorate was Corinth Church, Purvis. He is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. His address is Rt. 2, Box 186-A, Mt. Olive, MS 39119.

Bethany Church, Prentiss, has called Clay Chancellor as associate pastor effective Nov. 10. A native of Quitman,

Chancellor received his education at Clarke College and Southwestern Seminary. He previously served as a full time evangelist.

Julius Harbison has announced his resignation as pastor of First Church, Beaumont, effective Jan. 1. He previously served as pastor at Pachuta Church, Clarke Association, and Decedar Church, Jasper Association. He is a graduate of Clarke College. Harbison will be available for pastorate, interim, revivals, Bible studies, and supply. He can be contacted at (334) 824-7725.

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ALABAMA CHURCH (Birmingham metro area) seeking full-time Minister of Music and Youth. Salary and benefit package 30,000. House provided. Send resume to Dr. Larry Felkins, 4679 Birmingham Road, Maytown, AL 35118.

EUROPEAN TRAVEL: I am a conservative Baptist minister that is coordinating a tour to England and Scotland in June 1997. For more information contact Timothy Hamblin in Birmingham at (205) 979-0381 between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

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FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Respond to God's son

Matthew 2:1-12, 16



Jim Phillips

A child came running in from school with good news. He had earned a part in the Christmas play. When asked by his mother what part he would play he said, "I'm playing one of the three wise guys." As a third grader growing up in Oklahoma, I had just such a part. I remember singing a rather high part along the lines of "We three kings of orient are...." Though my voice was cracking, I was sure I got my message across.

The wisemen's journey to the place of the Christ child signals for us just how God leads those who are seeking his truths. Seeing the star in a dis-

tant land signaled to them that royalty had been born. The fact that it moved ahead of them as they traveled was a sign to them that they were being supernaturally led.

Where would you look for royalty except in a royal city like Jerusalem, the city of kings? Little did they know that their inquiry would be delivered to the hateful King Herod who perceived it as a threat to his throne (vv. 3-6). This paranoid ruler would thus direct his goons to slaughter the boy babies of Bethlehem as a sure fire means of securing his power (v. 16). Little did he know that

God had already taken steps to secure the safety of both the Christ child, his family and the Magi (vv. 12-15).

I've always had a curiosity as to whether or not the Magi ever came to be believers in the Christ they felt compelled to find and worship? There can be no doubt that God mysteriously moved them toward Bethlehem. When they returned home, were they satisfied that they had fulfilled their mission? What happens when you arrive at what you thought was your destiny only to discover a sense of incompleteness?

Maybe these are some of the feelings that we'll have to deal with in the coming days? As Christmas approaches, many people get into an emotional mood swing that they hope will

last on into the next year. It seldom does unless you find what you're looking for and then make the appropriate response. If you think the meaning of Christmas is to be found in some pretty box unwrapped on Christmas morning, you'll be deeply disappointed. If you think it will be found in the traveling, feasting, fellowshiping, and reminiscing over the next several days and weeks, again you might be left let down and exhausted. Those things are secondary to the real Christ event. And don't think you can make up for love withheld over the year by smothering someone with glitter and gifts when what they really need is you. That will only mask the real meaning of the season.

Christmas is not found in giving gifts but rather in receiving One. Funny isn't it how we've made Christmas into a

time when we honor others by giving gifts instead of offering ourselves to God out of appreciation for The Gift.

What is the best gift for someone who has everything? The gift of Jesus Christ the Lord. This gift can be incorporated into our own lives or can be offered to another as a token of our love for them. It can't be exchanged and is never the wrong size. One size fits all! It can only be received and it truly is the gift that keeps on giving right on in to eternity. The wise men were wise because they followed what God revealed to them. This Christmas, make the right response by accepting God's offer of Salvation in Jesus Christ. There is no greater gift to give or receive.

Phillips is pastor, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Savior for all!

Luke 2:7-20



Ronald Bishop

Two of the Gospels, Matthew and Luke, record the story of Jesus' birth. Both these writers considered it important to tell of the miraculous nature of the birth of Jesus, as well as the responses to his birth displayed by a number of people.

A Great Announcement (2:8-12). The nativity story begins with common people, a favorite group of Luke. It was not unusual to see shepherds in first-century Judea. They often found themselves far from home at nightfall, searching for pasture for their flocks. One group of shepherds was in the right place at the right time for an unusual announcement.

An angel appeared to those shepherds, and the glory of God illuminated the place as if

it were noon. These unusual events amazed and frightened the shepherds. The angel assured the shepherds that they had nothing to fear. Instead, they had good tidings which would bring joy to everyone. The news was the birth of a savior, Christ the Lord. "Christ" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for Messiah. "Lord" in this context indicates Jesus' divine nature. The long-awaited Messiah of the Jews had finally arrived. This was great news indeed! In case the shepherds should not believe the good news, the angel gave them a sign. They would find the baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in an animal's

feed-trough!

The Heavenly Response (2:13-14). At the announcement of the angel, the heavenly host that accompanied the angel rang out with praises to God, ascribing glory to the most high God. In addition, the heavenly host noted that the event marked by this

announcement would bring peace to people who were prone to embrace God's good will. Even the angels in heaven rejoiced at the good news of the coming of Jesus. They knew that the event surely would bring rejoicing from the earth.

The Human Responses (2:15-20). Imagine the great contrast between what the shepherds experienced during the singing of the heavenly host and their experience after the angels had left. Surely they were amazed, wondering if they had really seen and heard what they thought they had

seen and heard. Many times they had watched their sheep, but this had never happened. They decided to travel to Bethlehem and see this great thing. They knew it was "the Lord" who had made this known to them.

They hurried to Bethlehem (v. 16), finding Jesus in a manger. Afterwards, the shepherds told everyone they could find about the events of the night. Their message was received by all with great joy and wonder. For centuries the Jews had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, God's savior for his people. Now he finally had arrived!

But no one was more filled with wonder than Mary the mother of Jesus. Just a few months ago, she had been a young woman engaged to be married. Now, she found herself married and the mother of God's unique son. Surely it was all too much to take in. As mothers do, Mary kept all these

vivid memories in her heart. Until her dying day she would remember the angel's announcement, her visit to Elizabeth's house and Joseph's kindness and genuine love in refusing to abandon her. She would remember how her son was the center of attention of many who came to visit him and to recognize him as the Messiah.

After their visit with baby Jesus, the shepherds returned to their own region. Their experiences caused them to glorify God and praise him for all the things they had seen and experienced. Forever they would remember the night when the angel announced to them the birth of Jesus and their having seen him in person. Their lives would be changed forever for having been told that God had sent a savior for all people.

Bishop teaches philosophy and religion at Jones County Junior College, Ellisville.

LIFE AND WORK

Welcome the promised Messiah

Matthew 1



Cynthia Douglas

What does the birth of Jesus mean to me? Does God really understand my cares and my circumstances? How does an event which happened so long ago impact my life? Matthew 1 records the birth of the promised Messiah. The Messiah is Jesus, the Son of God, the one who knows our every need, and the One who gave His life to provide salvation for every person. Welcome the promised Messiah!

The long-awaited Messiah (Matt. 1:17). Matthew's genealogy of Jesus validates that he is the long promised Messiah, the Christ, the son of David, and the son of Abraham. After naming the exact lineage, verse 17 gives a summary statement of

the generations: 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the captivity in Babylon, and 14 from the captivity to Jesus.

"Christ" is not a name but a title meaning anointed. Jesus was specially sent by the Father to the world. He was to be the deliverer, the One who would unveil truths, and give his life for man. "Son of David" refers to Jesus' direct lineage to David, the great earthly king. "Son of Abraham" ties Jesus to the promise God made to Abraham concerning his future plan of blessing for the world. All of God's eternal plan is focused in Christ. He is the

long-awaited Messiah, the One who provides salvation, and the One who knows our every need.

Son of God and Son of Man, the Savior (Matt. 1:18-21). By Jewish custom, a betrothal was more than an engagement. It involved a binding contract prior to marriage.

Joseph's first reaction to Mary's being with child was to plan to secretly end the relationship. However, an angel of the Lord came to him and explained the baby was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and the baby would be named Jesus because he came to save his people from their sins (v.21). The name "Jesus" is a Greek form of the Hebrew word Joshua meaning "Yahweh is salvation." Jesus is the Son of God, meaning he is fully God. Also, Jesus is declared to be Son of Man indicating Jesus is fully human. Being human, we

struggle daily with the problem of sin. Jesus, being human, was able to identify with every person. He knows and understands about heartaches, suffering, rejection, and about being tempted to sin. Jesus, being divine, was able to pay the price for our sin. Because of his great love for every person, he gave his life as payment for our sin. He is the long-awaited Messiah and Savior!

God with us (Matt. 1:22-23). "And they shall call his name Immanuel, which is translated 'God with us' (v.23b). Matthew used the words of Isaiah 7:14 to declare Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's Word. The Old Testament promised that God was with his people, and the Tabernacle and the Temple were symbols of his divine presence. Now the New Testament is proclaiming how Jesus had come in the flesh to dwell among people. At the

end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he told his disciples: "Unless I go away, the Comforter will not come to you" (John 16:7b). Today God dwells in us as the Holy Spirit — what a wonderful truth!

Have you welcomed the long-awaited Messiah into your heart? As you read Matthew 1, do you see the clear picture of God and his great love for mankind? God is with us! Try to ignore the highly religious figures who have fallen or other believers in whom you have been disappointed. Look only to Jesus — he is the only true and perfect picture of God. God the Father, Jesus his Son and the Holy Spirit desire your love, surrender, and commitment. During this blessed Christmas season, will you gladly welcome the promised Messiah into your life?

Happy holidays!

Douglas is a member of First Church, Columbus.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Believe God's promises

Luke 2:22, 25-38

I picture Mary still aglow at this point. Just over a week has passed since her baby was born but what a blessed event this has been. In keeping with the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple to dedicate him to God (vv. 22-23). It would also be necessary to make an offering in keeping with the need for a new mother's purification. The offering of doves or pigeons was evident of Joseph's simple and meager ways (v. 24).

Baptists traditionally draw from this example and others whereby we dedicate our children to the Lord. A parental responsibility to God is to acknowledge children as a gift

from the Lord as well as express to him our desire to have his blessing on our children and homes.

Receiving them at the temple in Jerusalem that day was a man and a woman in search of a promise. God had promised Simeon and Anna that they would actually witness the arrival of the Messiah at some point prior to their deaths (vv. 26; 36-38). Not only had the mighty and majestic magi been clued in to what God was doing, even these simple senior saints were privy to the handiwork of God.

Maybe this Christmas for you has been one of waiting for



Jim Phillips

a miracle from heaven. Perhaps this is the first New Year without a blessed loved one and you're wondering whether or not God will break through and comfort your soul. The pattern I see in the scriptures is that God is always faithful to those who wait on him in faith.

Simeon and Anna both believed that the place to watch for the hand of God meeting their need was in the temple. While faithfully serving and watching God broke in and changed their remaining days on earth.

There's no greater time than an approaching new year to commit the promises of God to your memory and heart. God blesses best those who are expecting his blessing (Isa. 40:31). We're not certain how long either of these two waited for the fulfillment of God's

promise, only that he did fulfill it.

Simeon's praise in verses 29-32 further declared God's plan for his Son. This blessed child would be One who would seek to bridge the gap between the Gentiles and God as well (v. 32). What must have run through the minds of these young parents as they heard these strange predictions? This baby was indeed the promised Messiah which all of Israel had been hoping for. They too were awaiting the fulfillment of the promises of God for a Deliverer.

Simeon went on to reveal to Mary that this child would become one who would break her heart too (vv. 34-35). When Mary fully understood what this prediction was we can't be sure. She only knew that from the outset of Gabriel's revelation to her for her pending pregnancy (Luke 1:31), God's promises had been fulfilled to

her as well.

God keeps his promises to his children. His Word is to be believed, trusted and obeyed. Whenever we face the question of faithfulness in the face of uncertainty, may God call to mind the likes of Simeon and Anna and Mary. They acted on what the believed God was saying to them. They held out hope even as they watched the passing of time. God proves himself through the study and meditation of his Word. Desire in your heart right now to hold to the promises he reveals to you. He will not allow you to be forsaken or disappointed.

May God's richest blessing be yours in 1997. May you come to know him like never before and may your love for his Word grow greater with the passing of the year. Praying God's grace upon you all!

Phillips is pastor, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A glorious revelation

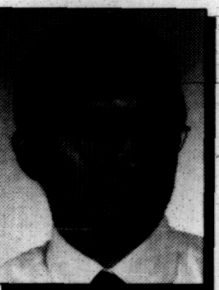
Matthew 17:1-9

The transfiguration is one of the experiences Jesus shared with the inner circle of the Twelve: Peter, James, and John. One finds Jesus alone with these three on several occasions in the gospels, but this is one of the most memorable. The transfiguration occurred almost a week after the Caesarean Confession recorded in Matthew 16.

The Transformation of Jesus (17:1-3). Much about the transfiguration experience is a mystery, but it is clear that it was a phenomenal spiritual experience. Jesus and the three disciples withdrew to a high mountain. There Jesus' face and his garments were changed, taking on a bright glow. In Jewish and Christian literature light and

brightness usually indicate holiness, divinity, or purity. All these ideas certainly fit the New Testament

understanding of Jesus. During the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Some scholars suggest that Moses represented the Law or Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. Elijah is thought to represent the prophets; for he is the only prophet whose life did not end in death. If this was the meaning for the inclusion of Moses and Elijah, the purpose of the transfiguration experience may have been to show that the scriptures of the Hebrews, symbolized by the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, attested to the



Ronald Bishop

divine mission of Jesus.

The Desire to Preserve the Moment (17:4). Human beings naturally desire to cling to things that they find pleasing. Simon Peter was so taken by this glorious experience that he wanted to preserve it forever. He offered to build three booths or small tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Some worship experience! How long has it been since you did not want to leave church, rather than wondering how much longer it would last! Peter enjoyed his time with Jesus, but this was the greatest.

The Voice of the Father (17:5). Peter was still speaking when God interrupted. Perhaps God's statement put the finishing touch on this experience that the three apostles would remember all their lives. Moses and Elijah had given their approval to Jesus' mission. Now

God indicates that he too is pleased with his son. Yet, he also had a command for Peter and the others: Listen to Jesus. God wanted the apostles to know for sure who they were following. The time would come when it would be easy to wonder if things were really as they seemed. Even John the Baptist wondered if Jesus really was the Messiah. God knew that the disciples would need memorable reminders like this to strengthen their faith when Jesus would be physically absent.

The Lesson for the Disciples (17:6-9). Hearing the voice of God caused the three disciples to fall on their faces in worship. Like Isaiah, the disciples were awed by God's power and concern for them. Sensing their amazement, Jesus instructed them to rise and not to be afraid. Upon opening their eyes, they discovered that Moses and Elijah had disappeared. Only Jesus stood before them.

Peter's request was denied.

Jesus did not choose to stay on the mountain in the special booths Peter was prepared to build. Instead, Jesus took the three down the mountain and commanded them not to tell of this vision until Jesus was raised from the dead. No doubt they did not fully understand what he was talking about until after the fact. Only then could they realize the importance of this experience that God had allowed them to share with Jesus.

The transfiguration surely proved to be a constant reminder not only to the three who witnessed it, but also to those to whom they told their memories. In the days when the early Christians would be persecuted and threatened with death, remembering such vivid stories would help to preserve the faith of the followers of Jesus.

Bishop teaches philosophy and religion at Jones County Junior College, Ellisville.

LIFE AND WORK

Worship the promised Messiah

Matthew 2

"Wise men still seek Him" is a familiar Christmas saying. Jesus is the promised Messiah who is worthy of all adoration, praise, and love. Adults are wise when they worship the King by living a Godly life. What is your response to the promised Messiah? Do you bow down, worship, and adore him?

A desire to worship (Matt. 2:1-2). After the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Magi came from the east to worship him. This event was probably months after the birth of Jesus because in verse 11 Jesus is referred to as a young child. Also, Mary and Jesus were in a house, not in the manger setting. Little information is known about the

magi, or wise men.

We do not know how many came (3 gifts are depicted in Christmas plays as representing 3 kings), their names, where they were from, or how they travelled. But we do know they were seeking "the King of the Jews." The Bible does not tell how the magi knew a King had been born but verse 2 says "we have seen his star in the East."

The magi had one clear purpose which was to worship Jesus. To worship is a human response to the divine. Also worship means to bow down, to reverence, and is a matter of the heart as praise and adoration are given. Wise men still



Cynthia Douglas

seek and find Jesus.

A pretense of worship (2:3-8). Herod, the King, was troubled to hear about a King of the Jews being born. He pretended to want information about baby Jesus so he could worship him. What were the reasons for Herod's deceitful actions? Political unrest existed, Herod was frightened to see this group of magi from the East because he feared their motives, and he was distraught about the possibility of a threat to his position as king.

Even today the problem of a pretense of worship exists. People misuse their religious beliefs to gain power, to maneuver and control other people, and even misuse the church - the chosen bride of Christ! Some adults view worship and the church as "What's in it for me?" Others use pretend worship to reinforce their

exalted self image or to maintain their standing in the community and social circles. Listen to the words of Jesus: "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

An expression of genuine worship (2:9-11). The star guided the magi to Jesus. Four verbs in verse 11 express the actions of the magi: they came, they saw, they fell down, they worshiped him! These actions are an expression of genuine worship. Worship always involves a coming to Jesus - a longing to be in his presence and commune with him. Worship involves seeing. True, we do not see Jesus with our physical eyes as they did. However, when we come to him we do see spiritually his divine nature, his love, and the fullness of his attributes. Worship involves falling down which means a complete humbling of self to the One who is

Creator and Savior. These three actions were culminated in genuine worship of Jesus - he alone is worthy of our praise, love, and adoration.

Genuine worship always includes giving. The magi gave gold, the most precious metal and associated with royalty. They also gave frankincense, a costly incense used only in most special occasions and associated with deity. The third gift was myrrh, a perfume which could represent a gift for a mortal, symbolizing the humanity of Jesus.

What is your response to the promised Messiah? Are you willing to come to him in faith, bow down in humility, and worship the One who created you, loves you, and has prepared eternal life for you? People, who are wise, still seek Him!

Douglas is a member of First Church, Columbus.

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

**NOV. 1, 1996-
NOV. 30, 1996**

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Carmen Rigby
Mr. & Mrs. Ted T. Shook
Mr. Roy Ritchie
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Singleton
Mrs. Sudie Rives
Mr. & Mrs. Joe T. Rives
Mr. & Mrs. David Denson
Mr. W. K. "Billy" Roberts
Morrison Heights Baptist Church
Paul Nunnery Sunday School Class
Mr. Leroy Rogers
Ora Baptist Church
Mrs. Mildred Rogers
Good Hope Baptist Church
Ms. Margaret Howard Rogers
Ms. Mary Lou Lott Hinds
Community College
Mrs. Marie Rush
Mrs. Mera C. Hall
Mr. Nathan Russell
Mr. & Mrs. James M. McIntosh
Mrs. Ruth Rutledge
Miss Dorothy Harrelson
Mr. German Van Rysseghem
Mr. Doug Courtney
Ms. Cindy Williams
Mr. John Ryledge, Jr.
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Mr. & Mrs. Rickie Tardo
Mrs. Ruth Sanders
Miss Fay Parker
Ms. Carol Sanders
Mrs. Martha Fail
Mrs. Faye Scott
Mr. & Mrs. Bill H. Davis
Mrs. Opal Scott
Mrs. Mera C. Hall
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Rex III and Heather Anne
Mrs. Ray M. Shannon Jr.
Mr. Ervin Shaw
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Mr. & Mrs. James G. Mims
Tallie Blount Sligh
Mr. & Mrs. Lewis Sewell



Drama and ballet were an inspirational part of the Christmas presentation by FBC Vicksburg at Powell Chapel on then India Nunnery Cmpus. Following this worship time, FBC Vicksburg enjoyed a fellowship time with BCV young people.



Michael Smith receives a gift from Stokers Motorcycle Club helper. BCV young people enjoyed fellowship, refreshments, and gifts provided by the Stokers.



*In a world
filled with
confusion...
Is there any
hope?*

God's desire is to give you hope.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..."

Romans 1:16

Sin robs us of this life of hope!

"For the wages of sin is death..."

Romans 6:23

Jesus cares for you!

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8

It's your choice.

You must decide for yourself if you are willing to turn from your sins and ask Jesus into your heart.

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."

Romans 10:9

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Rankin: Bold Mission Thrust in God's hands

JACKSON, Miss. (BP) — Bold Mission Thrust is gaining momentum and is well on its way to being fulfilled in God's time frame, Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin told the agency's trustees during their Dec. 8-11 meeting in Jackson.

Trustees called on the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee to rework the SBC Cooperative Program (CP) allocation formula "as a tangible demonstration" of its "heightened focus on missions."

While their resolution did not spell out how CP receipts ought to be divided, it clearly signaled a desire for an increase in foreign missions funding.

Currently, the board receives 50% of all funds that arrive undesignated at the Executive Committee from states, churches, or individuals. States withhold anywhere from 55% to 84% of the funds for use in their area before sending on any money to SBC causes.

Rankin's comments challenged critics who claim Bold Mission Thrust is a failure because several numerical goals established more than 20 years ago have not been achieved.

"Those who, with pessimism, announce the failure of Bold Mission Thrust from a statistical analysis are absorbed with human programs and plans and are out of touch with a sovereign God who is moving in providence and power 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations,'" Rankin said. "They

are locked into a narrow denominational view that has traditionally 'commended ourselves by ourselves and measured ourselves by ourselves' rather than seeing divine activity through a filter of faith.

"God does not work in 2% or 5% annual increments, but he unleashes his power and fulfills his purpose in a 'kairos' of time," Rankin said. "The spiritual results of Bold Mission Thrust are not something that can be planned and programmed in man's time frame. We can only come to him with prepared and submissive hearts and focus on the objective of an evangelized world and trusting God to work through what we offer to him."

During their meeting, trustees also approved a proposal creating a new category for missionary appointment — an apprenticeship — that eliminates one of the hurdles some have felt detoured potential missionary candidates from the field.

The new apprenticeship program allows candidates to go straight to the mission field from seminary without the required two years of full-time work experience in the U.S.

During business sessions trustees also approved:

— a new charter to be presented to the SBC Executive Committee officially changing the FMB name to the International Mission Board. The name change is expected to take effect next June.

— a recommendation from the board's location study committee that the board's head-



MAKING THE POINT — Mississippi native Jerry Rankin, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB), gestures while addressing new missionaries at the Dec. 8 missionary appointment service at First Church, Jackson. Rankin told FMB trustees meeting in Jackson Dec. 8-11 that the goals of Bold Mission Thrust will be fulfilled in God's time frame. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

quarters remain in Richmond, Va., where it has been based since its beginning in 1845.

— authorized the agency to enter Iceland and Greenland as new mission fields. The board will now seek missionary personnel for those countries.

— honored longtime board employee Thurmon Bryant, who is retiring after four years

as vice president of the office of mission personnel. Bryant was appointed as a missionary to Brazil in 1958, becoming area director for eastern South America in 1978 and serving until 1987. He served as associate vice president in the office of mission personnel from 1987 until becoming vice president in 1993.



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

I regret that my first date after more than a year as a widow involved sexual contact. Should I break off the relationship and start again with someone else?

Once sexual activity is introduced into a relationship, it is very difficult to stop — unless you pray earnestly, make a commitment to stop, seek accountability from a trusted Christian friend, and avoid compromising situations. Before you break off the relationship, answer these questions:

— Is the other person a growing Christian? Are you?

— Do the two of you have similar interests?

— Do you enjoy spending time with him?

— When the sexual relationship ends, will you still be interested in this person?

We often think as we get older that we shouldn't have to deal with issues we resolved at a younger age, but we must realize that we will forever be spiritual children in need of the Father's wisdom and guidance. Step back, slow down, reevaluate, and pray. Look at this person

through God's eyes, not through physical impulses.

I need help with my strong-willed preschooler. How can I break her willful behavior without breaking her beautiful spirit?

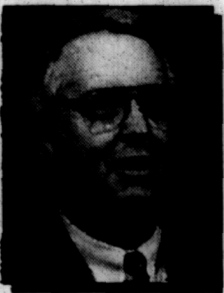
Focus on her beautiful spirit. When you "catch" her doing right, encourage her. Be more proactive in your parenting and spend more time with her. If you make this important investment now, the dividends will provide a great return when she reaches adolescence. Accept her as she is and affirm her strengths, talents, and abilities. Children like your daughter require large amounts of attention and affection. If she can't get your attention any other way, she will drive you to spank and otherwise punish her. Discipline is important, but you must make sure it is appropriate and consistent. She must understand that there are consequences for deliberate disobedience of established rules; what follows is respect and growth as a person. An excellent resource is Josh McDowell's "How to Be a Hero to Your Kids."

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

Wolfe resigns pastorate to foster new ministry

MOBILE, Ala. (ABP) — Prominent Southern Baptist leader Fred Wolfe will resign the Alabama pastorate he has filled for almost a quarter century.

Wolfe, once a candidate for president of the Southern Baptist Convention, announced his decision in a letter to the 7,800 members of Cottage Hill



Wolfe

Church in Mobile, Ala. He said he will resign Jan. 31, 1997, to begin a "ministry of encouragement" to pastors and churches.

"I am not resigning as your pastor because I am tired, burned out, discouraged or disheartened," he wrote. "I am not under pressure from anyone or anything. I am being led by God to a new ministry."

His new endeavor, he said, will be called "Barnabas, A Ministry of Encouragement" —

named for the New Testament disciple who bolstered the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

Wolfe, 58, was president of the influential Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and served two years as chairman of the powerful SBC Executive Committee. He became pastor of Cottage Hill Church, one of Alabama's largest, in 1972.

Wolfe has been at the forefront of the conservative movement that has held sway in the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979. In 1994 he ran unsuccessfully for SBC president, losing to Orlando pastor Jim Henry despite the endorsement of the convention's conservative leadership.

Wolfe's announcement surprised his Mobile congregation, which is in the midst of \$6.5 million expansion that includes a Christian academy scheduled to open next September.

Wolfe said he planned to make his announcement in January but acted earlier "due to rumors and speculation." He could not be reached for comment Dec. 5.